

Random Encounters

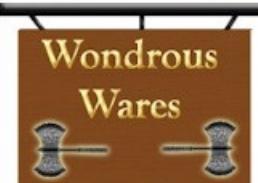
Weaving a Web of Evil

By Dale Donovan



Missing Merchandise

In this, the final installment of Weaving a Web of Evil, the owner of a magic shop and victim of the spell weavers' Web of thieves takes center stage, along with several of the items that have been stolen from the business. The items detailed here are potent items; DMs must be certain that introducing such items into the campaign (assuming the heroes recover them from the spell weavers) does not unbalance combats in favor of the player characters. DMs are encouraged to alter the details of the items to best fit their campaigns.



Salavra Whitestone, a low-level human wizard and owner of "Wondrous Wares," has contacted the heroes in an effort to recover some items that thieves have stolen from her business. It's possible that the PCs have done business with Salavra before, either buying or selling magic items from potions and scrolls up to powerful staffs and potent enchanted weapons.

Salavra suspects that more than simple thieves were involved in the robbery of her shop since she places magical protections (*alarm* spells, and so on) on the business each evening. She's right; agents of the Web have been casing the shop for weeks but suspected magical security measures. Telepathically sensing its agents' worry, the spell weaver known as Alpha accompanied the agents back to the shop, using a *polymorph self* spell to take the form of a male human wizard hired by the thieves' guild for just such instances. Alpha then used *detect magic* spells to choose several potent items for the agents to steal. The agents would have taken more for themselves, but a pair of constables passing by spooked them into retreat. The polymorphed Alpha took the items and returned to the spell weavers' lair, where the items currently remain. The stolen items include the following.

- "Deepsting" is a +2 *wounding rapier* (also known as a *rapier of puncturing*) that, until recently, belonged to the premier duelist in the city, a handsome elf named Aurian. The rapier is extremely well balanced, and its blade sports faint details of scorpions when held up to the light. (These figures are not etched into the metal but rather seem to exist in the play of light upon the metal and almost seem to move of their own accord.) Aurian's gambling debts mounted beyond both his capacity to pay and his ability to challenge those he owes to fatal duels, so he sold the rapier to Salavra to pay his creditors. He intended to buy the blade back as soon as his luck at the tables turned, and he's now furious with Salavra that the blade is gone. He blames her for its loss, claiming it's her petty vengeance for him dismissing her attempts at romancing him. The reverse is actually true; she rebuffed his advances and the anger that rejection created now fuels at least some of his feelings toward the shop owner.
- "Moonglow," a *ring of shooting stars*, came to the shop from a distant land. This particular ring possesses a faint sparkle as if extremely fine glitter in silver, white, and various hues of blue had been worked into the platinum of the band. It last belonged to a good-aligned druid named Havriil, who was fighting a lonely battle trying to save her remote oasis from a tribe of gnolls that wished to add the fertile ground and freshwater spring to their territorial holdings. She fought well, but was eventually overcome. The gnolls looted her dead body and took the ring, but didn't realize it was magical. When the next caravan season began and the first caravans found the oasis was now in the hands of the gnolls, the caravan companies pooled their resources and hired a band of adventurers to clean out the gnolls. The heroes succeeded and came into possession of the ring, but they donated it to a church in exchange for having one of their number returned to life. The ring has been bought and sold several times until Salavra bought it from an adventuring wizard who was in the city. He had recently gained a more powerful pair of rings and so sold the ring to the shop owner. The order of druids Havriil belonged to would like to have the ring returned to them, but they are currently unaware of its location.
- "Twinkle," a *gem of brightness*, came to Salavra's shop just recently in a dwarven caravan from the mountain range nearest to the city. The dwarves uncovered the magic gem in their diggings. They would not say if the gem was part of a treasure cache they uncovered, if they took the gem from the orcs or bugbears that also reside in those mountains, or if the gem is not a manufactured item at all, but a rare, naturally occurring magical-mineral deposit that legends say these mountains produce from time to time. (Usually, according to the legends, events of great portent are about to take place in or near the mountains when a magic gem shows up.)
- "Guardheart," a pair of *bracers of armor +5*, were bought by Salavra from a wandering

cleric/sorcerer of the god of magic (or mischief). In actuality, the items are *bracelets of defenselessness*, but neither Salavra nor the thieves who took the bracelets are aware of this. The bracelets have an interlaced knotwork pattern primarily of silver and gray in hue, though lines of sea green and foam white also work their way through the main design.

Bringing the Parts Together

Now that you have all of the installments at your fingertips, it is possible to utilize the shop as a main focal point for several of the hooks presented in the third part, meaning that the store itself can be but one of the problems that the PCs discover. With the help of Salavra and others, the PCs may get to the bottom of the overall problem and encounter more than they may have wished to encounter.

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